

Stanton Family Cemetery

East side of Virginia Route 677, 0.4 mile north of Virginia Route 676

Diana Mills

In 1853 Nancy Stanton of Buckingham County, Virginia, purchased 46.5 acres of land, thus becoming one of the few free black landholders in the region. The social and economic status of the Stanton family, headed by Nancy Stanton and her husband, Daniel, continued to grow as they moved into more prominent occupations, purchased additional land, and acquired material possessions. Nancy Stanton became the first known individual interred in the Stanton Family Cemetery when she died in 1853.

Located on the original family estate, the Stanton Family Cemetery once served as the burial ground for the extended Stanton family. Because the farmstead, consisting of approximately 91.5 acres of land acquired in the 19th century by Nancy Stanton and her son and grandson, has remained in the family, the cemetery has survived 20th-century growth with little change. The condition of the house and other buildings on the property declined after the family moved in the 1930s, making the cemetery a rare surviving resource that represents the family's distinct cultural role in the county and state.

Many African American cemeteries, both free and slave, have been lost to development, forestation, vandalism, neglect, and agriculture. This cemetery, however, appears to exist in its original state. There are at least 36 burial sites, many of which are marked with slate markers. The simple but distinctive slate markers were probably brought to the cemetery by members of the Stanton family who worked in a nearby slate quarry. The markers occupy their original positions, and the surrounding landscape retains its rural character. The cemetery's size and the fact that it remains remarkably intact make it a rare and significant resource in the African American history of Virginia. [A 4/29/93, 93000350]